



Tips for Schools to Enhance Family Engagement

- **Prioritize.** - Make parent engagement your priority.
- **Manage parent expectations.**
 - **Publish Dates** – Set an annual calendar of meetings and events. Try to follow a consistent pattern (for example, the first Monday of every month).
 - **Post a list** of all staff - along with their phone numbers and emails.
 - **Communicate** - Use a variety of communication tools to make sure your message gets through - School messenger, email, Portal, and school website. Flyers and e-mails are good for communicating a date and time. Use your newsletter and Web site to let people know about your accomplishments too.
- **Evaluate.** - Look closely at your school's activities and decide what's working and what isn't. Don't just do something because "that's what we've always done." New ideas can create new excitement for your families.
- **Incorporate "fun."** – More families will participate if an event is fun.
- **Host a School Family Night.** - This type of event usually gets more parents to connect with your school. Partner with a community organization and offer a "free" event.
- **Limit meeting time.** - People worry about time commitments. Limit the amount of time for meetings and events.
- **Personally invite parents and families.** - The best way to get parents involved is to extend a *personal* invitation. This could be a teacher calling or emailing their student's families or their child requesting their presence. Don't just send flyers home and then wonder why nobody "showed up." Create situations in which you can communicate with people one on one.
- **Show appreciation.** - Awards, compliments, a simple thank-you. Always let people know that you appreciate their help, whether they just organized a successful fundraiser or attended a school event.
- **Lead.** - Look beyond today. Does your school have long-term parental engagement goals? How will you get there? If you want to get parents excited, share your vision and give them something to work toward.
- **Market.** - Sing the praises of your PTA/PTO/SAC or other parent group. When you raise money, make sure people know what it was able to buy for their kids. A little recognition goes a long way toward building relationships with parents—and encouraging parent involvement.
- **Survey.** - Don't just wonder what it will take to increase parental engagement. Ask your parents/families. Share the results. Move forward.

- **Share information with families.** - Research shows that students with involved parents perform better in school, score better on standardized tests, have fewer behavioral problems, are less likely to use drugs and alcohol, and go to better colleges. Make sure you get the word out!
- **Train staff on parental engagement.** - Make sure your staff knows what is expected of them. Have staff attend the Family Friendly Schools training workshop.
- **Be visible.** - Be visible at all events.
- **Welcome families.** – Throw out the Welcome Mat! Extend a warm welcome when families/community come to the school. Acknowledge visitors within 10 seconds. Answer phones with a welcoming tone.
- Make **new families** feel welcomed. – Helping new families adjust with a new school often increases the parent involvement at the school.
 - Have a welcoming committee – Have the committee call and welcome families to the school and answer any questions that they may have.
 - Provide families with information about your parenting group – PTA/PTO/SAC.
 - Let parents know the volunteer opportunities available.
- Develop a **Parent Engagement Statement** that answers the question: *“What do you we believe and value about parent engagement?”*
 - Take the statement seriously.
 - Do not give it lip service. Walk the talk.
- Write achievable **family engagement goals** for your staff:
 - Ex: Return all parent emails/calls within 48 hours.
 - Ex: Acknowledge all guests/visitors within 10 seconds.
 - Ex: Don't tolerate poor customer service.
- **Recognize and reward** staff who establish positive parent/family partnerships.
- Write achievable **family engagement goals for families.** Set the expectations. You don't have to be a fundamental school or have a school compact to let families know what you expect from them.
- Send your staff – anyone who interacts with parents/families/the community - to the **Family Friendly Schools workshop.** They are offered monthly.
- Complete the School **Family Friendly Walk-through Checklist.**
 - Implement changes to enhance your school.
 - Celebrate the things that you do well.
- Create a **Parent Engagement Team.** The goal of the team is to:
 - Create a welcoming school environment for families and visitors.
 - Engage families and the community in ways that support student achievement.
- **Build trust** with parents and the community.
 - Morning coffee with parents/pizza with parents once a month.
 - Open houses for businesses – Provide tours of the school, discuss the school's SIP and how they can help meet those goals.